From the Editor's Desk

The times they are achanging. In this column in the July, '86 issue, I printed a supposed "Letter to the Editor" complaining about lack of support for the ST by the Club in general and this newsletter in particular. I took the letter writer, "Furious in Fair Oaks", and other ST owners to task for not submitting any articles, and pointed out that such support had to come from them and not somebody else.

This nagging had its intended effect, and ST articles started rolling in. By the December '86 issue, I could report that "fully half of the newsletter concerns the ST! Must I now start nagging for articles about the 8-bits?" Now, not quite a year later, it is time for such nagging. Recently it has been difficult to keep this from being an "all ST journal".

This is not a localized phenomenon; newsletters from other clubs exhibit the same lack of 8-bit stuff. [That makes finding something to reprint even harder!] It is reasonable that the new boy on the block [the ST] should get most of the attention, but is there nothing left to say about a dear old friend? So, you 8-bitters out there, I implore you! Think about something for the newsletter; bought a new product? write a review; learned something new? share it with the rest of us.

We still have no volunteer to take over as the Editor of this rag. As I said last time, the December issue will be my last. The current plans, should none be forthcoming by the first of December, are for me to make up a single sheet listing the meeting dates for 1988, along with a statement of the need for an Editor. That will have to do as a newsletter until someone volunteers for the job. Is that what you want to see? Just keep doing what you are now and that is what you will get!

Speaking of meeting dates for 1988; there's a change a-coming. Starting with January, 1988, the General Meeting will be on the first Wednesday of each month. Mark your calendars as soon as you get them.

CLUB NOTES

By Kim Beattie

THINGS TO COME

We will have a demonstration of PC DITTO at the October General meeting. PC DITTO is the IBM emulator for the ST that allows the ST to run IBM software. LOTUS 1-2-3, and all the other "big name" programs CAN run on your ST. Come and see PC DITTO turn a ST into an IBM Clone.

After almost a year in the making, the new constitution and bylaws are ready to be presented to the membership. The November meeting will be devoted to the discussion (and hopefully, the acceptance) of this new set of Club organizational documents. This will be an important (dare I say historic?) meeting. You will receive a copy of the new documents at least two weeks before the November meeting. Read them and come to the meeting prepared to discuss them. This is your opportunity to decide the future of our Club. Don't miss it!

FUND RAISING

You should have seen the back of Dale's van after the last meeting. Jammed full of newspapers! I think it's safe to say that so far, the paper drive is a success! Dale turned in 920 pounds of newspaper to the recycling center and at the current rate of $45/ton, that adds about $20 to the Club's Treasury. Easy money! Keep those newspapers coming! (By the way, the recycling center will accept newspapers only. So please bring newspapers only to the meeting. Sorry, no magazines or printer paper.)

The ENTERTAINMENT '88 books are now available. These books contain hundreds of two-for-one coupons good at dozens of Sacramento restaurants, movie theatres, the Sacramento Opera, Symphony, and Ballet. Many other theatre and special events in the Sacramento area are included also. There are coupons for A's and Giants tickets, CSUS football and basketball tickets and golf, bowling, and other activities are included also. There is also a special section of coupons for areas outside of Sacramento, such as Lake Tahoe, Reno, San Francisco. Even Los Angeles and San Diego! The book sells for $30, of which the club gets $6. If you ever "go out on the town", I think you'll find the ENTERTAINMENT '88 a great value!

Why is a computer club selling the ENTERTAINMENT '88 book? It's an easy way for the Club to get a little extra income and costs us nothing to offer you the book. Take a look at the "demo" copy of the Entertainment '88 book at any meeting. Tell 'em Mr. Kim sent you!

RAFFLE NEWS

The raffle continues to be a big success. As always, the raffle winner gets his or her choice of any item on the raffle table. New items continue to be donated to the Club raffle and the selection of items grows.

8-bit owners can now choose from: LETTER PERFECT, DATA PERFECT, VISICALC, GRAPHIC GENERATOR, WIZARD'S CROWN, KARATEKA, MEGAFONT, TELEATARI, RUBBER STAMP, TOP DOS 1.5, THE FINANCIAL COOKBOOK, SYNFILE+, BASIC XL, a CX85 keypad or a SUPRA 300 baud modem with BACKTALK terminal software.

The ST items are: ZOOMRACKS II, STAR GLIDER, LEATHER GODDESSES OF PHOBOS, TIME BANDIT, KING'S QUEST II, THE BLACK CAULDRON, ST STAR RAIDERS, BALANCE OF POWER, or a mouse pad.

There is also an Atari "Space Age" joystick that can be used with either computer.

A really great selection of software and other items, true, but you can't win unless you buy a ticket! Tickets are $1 each or six for $5. Give your luck a try at the next meeting!

[Special thanks to Jeff Baumgardner for the CX85 keypad and Michael Riley for the Supra modem. Thanks guys!]

From the ACCESS Archivist
by Bob Haynes

In the continuing effort to bring news of free and inexpensive computer items to ACCESS members, this space is pleased to remind you once again of the FREE periodicals you can pick up at computer and book stores and at newsstands. One of these is MicroTimes, which has the look-and-feel that InfoWorld abandoned when it decided that IBM would drive all other computers off the market.

MicroTimes is a monthly with news and a thematic feature in each issue. It even has a column by John Dvorak at the back to complete the resemblance to the old InfoWorld. The featured theme for the October issue was educational computing, very much in keeping with the publication's heavy emphasis on Apple.

Scattered among the pages of barf-making Apple happy talk, the judicious Atarian can find items of interest. For example, there is a fair amount of material on the ST. Nothing on the Atari String One. It doesn't exist. It never did. Then there is the review of the ten best educational software titles for the Apple II. I urge all Atarians to study the list. All that garbage you've ever heard or read about Apple's clear superiority in software.... Does anyone dare say it? The Emperor is rather scantily clad!

John Dvorak is one of the handful of sane professional computer journalists. He has not forgotten that there was life before computers and that there is still life beyond computers. His October column talks about vertical market software and the history of the Checker Cab Company. Read the following two sentences from the article. Memorize them.

"The classic vertical market story is in a business that historically paral-

lels and predates the computer indus-try--the automobile industry. We study it and we see our future."

Nobody, to the best of my knowledge, has put that in commercial print before. A hundred avenues of exploration lead away from those sentences. The implications should take the reader's breath away. Unless the reader has already given up breathing as a waste of effort.

ST SIG Report
by Dave Schwartz

The September meeting was held on Monday, September 7th. At the meeting we discussed the direction of the SIG. The SIG is now 1 year old and has grown in size during this time. The members decided to keep each SIG meeting in an open format. Guest speakers will be reserved for the monthly ACCESS meetings as some subjects would appeal to everyone in the Club, not just ST owners, such as the upcoming PC-DITTO demonstration. Also, I would like to encourage more ST members to come to the General meetings as all Club business including election of officers, raffle, and general Club information is carried on during this meeting. Also, the open format would allow for members to break up into groups and socialize more.

Many of you did not attend the meeting and no one brought equipment to the last meeting, thus no software was able to be demonstrated. We need your support in order to keep the ST*SIG going else it may, in the future, have to fold.

The ST*SIG meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. on the 2nd Monday of each month at SIERRA HI-TECH at 10561 Old Placerville Rd., near Mather Air Force Base.

Atari Bits & Pieces

by Kim Beattie

The new Atari 1200 bps modem is now available at local stores. A year late, but it's here at last. This modem will work with the ST (or any other computer for that matter) and will direct connect to the 8-bit Atari too, but the software for the 8-bit is not ready yet. Real Soon Now... Of course if you have a 850 interface you can use the new modem with your 8-bit without having to wait for the new 8-bit software (a new version of EXPRESS written by Keith Ledbetter).

Last month's column said that ICD had released their version of the 8-bit 80-column card for sale. Wrong. ICD may never release the product as they don't see much of a demand for it. The Atari 80 column card is in the Atari warehouse and is shipping. We should see it in the local stores "any day now." Also last issue, I said that Neil Harris had been quoted as saying the Atari PClone had failed it's initial FCC testing. Wrong again. Neil himself denied that statement at our last General Meeting. It is expected that the Atari PC will be on dealers shelves by Christmas. The Megas too. (where have we heard that one before?)

September was a good month for Atari owners. In addition to the Atari modem, many new software packages were released. I can't remember a better month for new products.

New items for the ST include: GFA COMPANION and TUNE UP!, a hard disk optimizer (from Michtron), THE BARD'S TALE, MUSIC CONSTRUCTION SET, MARBLE MADNESS, and EMPIRE (all from Electronic Arts), the BOULDERDASH CONSTRUCTION KIT (Epyx), F-15 STRIKE EAGLE (Microprose), ROAD WAR EUROPA, RINGS OF ZILFIN, THE WRATH OF NIKADEMUS (SSI), BREACH (Omnitrend), PINBALL WIZARD (Accolade), THE ADVANCED OCP ART STUDIO, KNIGHT ORC, and TRACKER (Rainbird), LABEL MASTER ELITE (Migraph), and MICROLAWYER, a software package to help you set up legal

documents. Let's see, that's at least 18 new items, and I'm sure there's more that I have missed or overlooked!

The 8-bit computer had a number of new software releases also: GUILD OF THIEVES, ALTERNATE REALITY--THE DUNGEON, THE ETERNAL DAGGER (a sequel to WIZARD'S CROWN), SPITFIRE 40, and the BOULDERDASH CONSTRUCTION KIT.

Still all games, true, but now that developers are once again writing for the 8-bit, we should see some more practical applications coming along as soon as the software companies see that there is an Atari 8-bit market. Already a number of small companies are writing some interesting software for the 8-bit. Take a look at the small ads in ANTIC or ANALOG to see some of the interesting programs that are available for the Atari 8-bit like: TURBOBASE from Micromiser Software, FORMS GENERATOR from Twenty-Fifth Century Software, NEWS STATION, NEWS STATION COMPANION, and PUBLISHING PRO from Reeve Software. Another small company, Innovative Concepts, has a number of interesting items for the Atari 8-bit computer. There is a FUNCTION KEY key kit that, when installed, gives the XL/XE four function keys (like the 1200XL). The keys are programmable. Another interesting item is the ICX-85 keypad. This is a modified Atari CX-85 keypad. Innovative Concepts claims it needs no handlers to operate and will work with "all 8-bit software." If true, this would be a great addition to any 8-bit system. There is even a trade-in policy. Send them your CX-85 keypad and save $10 on the ICX-85. RAM-AID is for those of you with upgraded XL/XEs. Install this and have the capability to perform coldstarts without turning your computer off AND still retain all data in ramdisks. MODEM-MOUTH is an external speaker for modems that don't have one, like the Atari 835, and 1030.

It looks like it will be the "little guy," instead of the the big companies that will prove that the 8-bit is still a very powerful computer in it's own right.

Now that the Atari 1200 bps modem is finally out, I hear that SUPRA will soon release a 2400 bps for $189! Hayes compatible with built in phone memory for eight numbers.

PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS has the answer for frustrated 1040 ST owners. It's called MOUSE MASTER and plugs into the inaccessible joystick/mouse ports on the ST. You can then plug two joysticks and a mouse into the MOUSE MASTER and choose between mouse or joystick. Sure it's something else to find room for on your crowded computer desk, but well worth it for the frustration and inconvenience it will cure. I can hardly wait for mine!

Now that most of Atari's 1987 vaporware is out or almost out, Atari is gearing up for a whole bunch of new vaporware announcements for 1988. According to Neil Harris, there will be a number of new announcements at the fall COMDEX show. Doesn't Atari ever learn? I wonder if anyone will even pay attention this time...

AIRBALL

Reviewed by David M. Schwartz

"Now you're really in trouble", begins the message from the evil Wizard, "For I'm turning you into a ball and sending you into a mansion with over 150 rooms!!" As the evil Wizard tells you in the introduction, you are a ball with a slow leak that must be pumped up regularly. You must find the objects in the room that have been left behind as these objects may assist you in your fight for survival. Your survival depends on your finding the spellbook that contains the instructions on how to turn yourself back into a human.

For some time now ATARI ST owners have been screaming for a version of Marble Madness for their machines, but these screams have been ignored by Electronic Arts. The bill has been filled with the release of Airball from Microdeal. While I don't think this is a replacement for Marble Madness, it does have all of the flavor and graphics similar to Marble Madness.

Airball contains some of the best graphics and animation I have seen on any computer. You begin your journey on the top of an air pump. When your ball is pumped up, you must jump off of the pump before you explode from too much air. There is a yellow bar on the bottom of the screen that shrinks as your ball loses its air. You must find another air pump in another room before you run out of air altogether.

As you manuever your airball from room to room you must be careful as to not run in to anything sharp or Pssssssssssssssss you run out of air and fly around the room. You must also look for other objects such as the flashlight to allow you to see in the dark rooms. Control of your airball can be accomplished with either the joystick, keyboard, or mouse. Selection of controller is accomplished by pressing the F1 key prior to the beginning of the game. I found that using the joystick was the only acceptable way to play the game as the mouse and keyboard were both useless as controllers.

This game is very addicting and fun to play. However, it does not offer a two-player mode, nor does it permit you to save your high scores. Other than this, I would highly recommend this game for your collection.

MICRODEAL U.S.A.
576 S. Telegraph
Pontiac, Michigan 48053
(313)334-8729
$39.95

CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS

by Donna McMillin

The programs I'll talk about today are both from First Byte and both for the St. They are called First Shapes, and KidTalk.
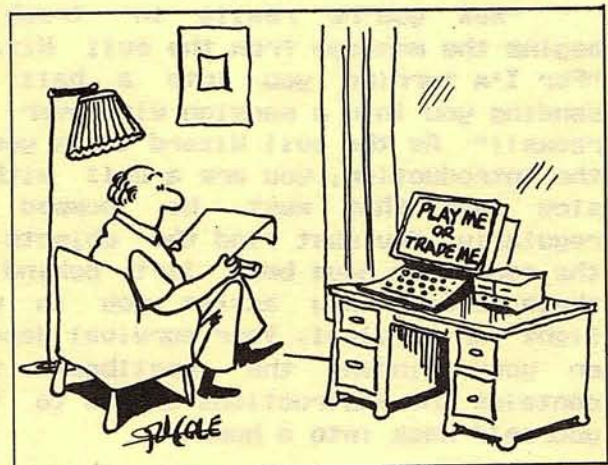
First some general stuff that applies to both programs. They are both 'talking' programs, though geared for entirely different age groups. Both are excruciatingly slow but the kids don't mind. It's as if each time the screen changes the entire program is reloaded. They both come with a very good booklet containing instructions and extra ways you can use the programs to make learning fun for your child. There is little or no animation, but it is not missed, because of the talking ability. Now on to specifics.

First Shapes is for the younger set and helps to teach basic geometric shapes. There are five 'modules' in this program and they are as follows:

1) Shapes...Learning shapes and the concept of bigger and smaller.
2) The Toy Factory...Using the shapes you learn to 'build' toys (very popular in this house)
3) The Toy Box...Save the toys that you build so you can look at them later.
4) The Toy Fair...Help Ted E. Bear to find shapes and win the arcade games.
5) Make-A-Match Game...Like the card game 'concentration', matching shapes.

This is a very nice program for the younger kids and some of the modules will be used often by older kids as well. (Make-A-Match has skill levels). Even if your kids know their shapes already they will probably like to use this one just because it talks. My two year old loves to just sit here and click the mouse to hear the bear talk, he even talks back. The instructions are very clear and it is very easy to use. Even a non-reader can use this one because it talks to them. If they can control the mouse, they can play on their own. The little one will need help in the mouse control department but, hey, what are us parents for?

The second program is called KidTalk, and is geared towards the older, elementary school aged kids. This one is like a mini word processor that talks. It has the ability to cut and paste your typing, almost like the real thing. My favorite part about KidTalk is the walk through 'The Guided Tour' which takes the child through all the commands available and how to use them. Our kids like to just turn on the Guided Tour and sit back to listen to the parrot talk. Some neat features of KidTalk are the dicionary, where you can adjust the pronounciation of words (example: Library is pronounced lib-rair-ee...in the dictionary it is entered in as lie-brair-ee, so the computer will pronounce it correctly). Another neat thing is it gives you the ability to adjust the vocal range of the voice, from low male voice to high female. There are codes that you can insert into your story that enable you to give each character it's own personalized speaking voice. Right now all we really do with KidTalk is type in some stories from books and the kids sit and read along with the voice. But I'm sure that as they get older they will use it more and more. I think that you will like the First Byte software. Even if it is slow, I feel it's a pretty good investment.

n Thinking About Computers
by Bob Haynes

SINGLE PURPOSE COMPUTERS

I had originally planned to cover another topic this month. But the September ACCESS meeting and a couple of recent moves by Atari virtually force us to look at the hardware end of the computer. In a nutshell,

a) Neil Harris predicts a rosy sales season for Atari this Xmas season.
b) Atari buys the Federated chain.
c) Atari licenses a calculator company to use the Atari name and logo.

First a look at Neil Harris's prediction. Any true Atarian would wish that Atari sales hit it big. Whatever can increase Atari's installed user base will help insure its continued existence. But keep in mind that the market for general purpose home computers hit the saturation point about four years ago. Since then, growth has been slow; fewer than 20% of all U. S. families have felt the need for a general purpose computer to this day. Also keep in mind that there are all sorts of gadgets vying for the U. S. consumer's electronic dollar. Camcorders, VCRs, TV sets, and music synthesizers are what you see displayed prominently in large department stores. Home computers, if there are any, are tucked away in some middle aisle. They are definitely not the "hot ticket" this year on America's Christmas shopping list.

But. There is a legion of products out there that we can call single purpose or limited purpose computers. They do one thing or perhaps a small cluster of related things that we can do on a 400/800 /XL/XE/ST. Some of them have been around for a long time. People will buy them instead of a general purpose computer because 1) a single function is all they need and 2) the single purpose computer is what they can afford.

Here are a few of the single purpose computers available this year in stores:

*An interactive video game system that uses VHS tapes with real film footage and complete with headphones, target pistol, and one game for $89. Additional titles available.

*Standalone chess programs, complete with board layout and pieces in the $30 to $70 range, with voice synthesis on highend models.

*A full-featured checkbook balancer, the size of a hand-held calculator, for $20.

*A hand-held vest pocket computer for $120; it does the basic work of a desktop accessory package (calendar, appontment book, address/telephone book, memo pad, calculator).

*A standalone word processor for $800, with all features including software, a 50,000-word spelling checker, and a daisywheel printer.

*For kids, who comprise more than 40% of the Christmas market, single purpose computers have become a staple item. Most of the "toys" talk... better than grownup computers do. The venerable SPEAK-N-SPELL continues to sell well, for example. Prices for these "toys" hover around $40. You can get one for $70 that will tutor your tyke to program in BASIC.

*Of course, we cannot omit the Atari 7800 with a list price of $90, which plays Dig Dug, Karateka, and Summer Games, among others.

You and I know how misguided people are for buying this stuff, rather than saving up for an Atari computer system. Our wisdom isn't worth squat to these people. So. It's modest proposal time. Atari has positioned itself as an electronics retailer. It has set a precedent by licensing its name and logo to a line of calculators. Why not continue to the logical conclusion? Market an Atari line of "TALK-N-TUTOR" toys. Market an Atari line of standalones of the types mentioned above. Properly done, a move like this could make Atari the name in home computing ten years from now. Historically, it works. Apple slapped its logo on C.ITOH's 8510 printer, for example. For several years, this was an important profit maker for both companies.

EIGHT BITS HIGH, AND RISING...

by Jim Dysle

Through the years with my Atari, I have written many programs; drawn pictures; played music; written stories, articles, letters; prepared resumes; created posters, signs, cards; telecommunicated; kept inventories; used financial spreadsheets; introduced others to the Atari computer; taught novices; and, yes, I have played many games.

I still recall a winter day in 1981 when an elderly co-worker inquired "What can you do with a home computer?" Her question was sincere and I was overwhelmed with astonishment. I responded with "What can't you do with a home computer?". As I spoke those words, I realized that my overpowering enthusiasm had provided a gut level response. I quickly followed with a list of the things that I did with my Atari.

Six years later and that question, in one form or another, is still being asked. I usually rattle off my use of the computer until I think I have justified the existence of home computers. The next question is usually "Why Atari?" Then, "Why the old Atari?"

I originally bought my computer to have fun. I am still having fun. When this ceases to be fun, I will stop. Words to this effect usually draw a knowing smile that seems to imply, "Aha, what you are really saying is that you use your computer to play arcade games." One of these days, in spite, I intend to respond with "Yes, that's right. I have been playing Pacman for six years, non stop, and I will continue until I die." I doubt it would help to say that in 1980, I sold my Atari 2600 because I was bored with computer games. But this conversation would likely lead down familiar paths and I am a weary traveler.

Today, I bring before you the subject of letter writing with the Atari. But before I start, let me jump back in time. Back to a time...Before Atari. Have you got the picture? Gruesome, ain't it?

Some decades ago, the mailman brought me a large envelope. The writing upon that envelope was the most ornate and flourishing hand written script I have ever seen. Intrigued, I opened the envelope and withdrew a piece of cardboard and two sheets of...paper? The cardboard was included to prevent the envelope from being folded. The sheets were coarse, more like fabric than paper, and the coloring seemed to indicate age. The words upon those sheets were also handscripted in the same style of the envelope. It was a letter from an elderly couple who had befriended me during my stay in their city.

Though their words were appreciated, I was more impressed with the many hours they must have spent in preparing the letter. Since then, I tend to take a little extra effort when writing to friends. An old friend was in the military and he requested more letters from home. About a month later, I received a letter from him expressing his astonishment over a letter he had received. According to him, that letter he received was composed of thirteen typewritten pages of single line spacing and elite type. He said that he had taken a vow to finish reading my letter within his lifetime.

Today, I have my Atari, Word Processor, Print Shop, Typesetter, colored papers and ribbons, etc. to prepare letters to my friends. When I am writing a letter that will fit upon one sheet, I use Print Shop. I create a card in the usual manner and put an instruction on the inside bottom of the card which says "SEE INSIDE". After printing the card, I flip the unfolded sheet and re-insert it into the printer. Upon the backside, I select a graphics header from Print Shop or Typesetter. Beneath the header, I place the text which I have earlier prepared with my word processor. In some instances, I make multiple printer passes to accomodate colored ribbons.

For larger letters, I put graphics headers and footers upon each sheet, using either Print Shop or Typesetter, or both. I use these graphics as cartoon panels to tell a story that may or may

President's Corner

by Dave Schwartz

(8 BITS HIGH, Cont.)

not be related to the text. These letters require multiple printer passes to allow for different programs and colored ribbons. As you might expect, I don't do this very often but the recipients seem to appreciate the effort.

There are also times, such as when we move, take a prolonged vacation, etc. that I create a newsletter with Typesetter and mail it off to (hopefully) interested friends and relatives. In some of my letters, I also include a sign that I have prepared using Print Shop. These signs are prepared specifically for the addressee and meant to be humorous.

And while I am on the subject of signs, I also create silly signs that clutter our walls at home and at my wife's office. At her office, it is not uncommon for her co-workers to request a copy for themselves. About a month ago, her co-worker wanted to borrow some of our original signs. She wanted to show them to her husband in hopes of providing an additional incentive for him to buy a computer for their home. Since I am susceptible to flattery, I went a step further and created a number of new signs to show her husband. Last week, I asked my wife whether her co-worker and husband had decided to buy a home computer. My wife nodded affirmatively and then somewhat reluctantly informed me that they had chosen to buy two complete computer systems for their home, both will be IBM PS. $Sigh$
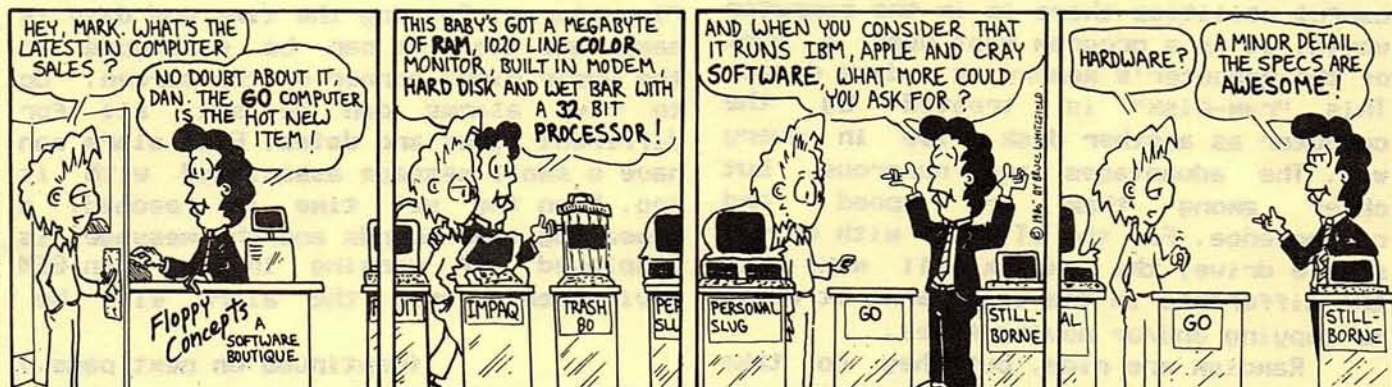
And now, if you will excuse me, I must get back to my Pacman game.

I was glad to see such a good turnout at our September general meeting. Those of you who did not attend missed out on an exciting and informative evening with Neil Harris. Neil also brought along a production model of the Mega 4 ST with the blitter chip installed and running. He told us of what was involved in turning Atari around from near total collapse under Warner Communications to the very profitable and successful Company it is today. He spoke of the pending purchase of the Federated Group stores by Atari and what plans lie ahead. October should see the kickoff of a very extensive advertising campaign by Atari that should run until early 1988. He also said that as many products as possible, that had been previously announced, should be shipped in October, and that Atari is committed to supporting the 8-bit line as well as the ST line. A lot of new software has been released during the past month and there is a lot more to come.

Just a general reminder to everyone that our 2 fund raising projects are still in progress -- the 1988 Entertainment books and the paper drive. Bring your newspapers to the next General Meeting and Dale will collect them from you. The Entertainment books contain 2-for-1 coupons for everything from meals to movies to musical events and much more. Each book only costs $30.00 of which $6.00 goes to the Club. Funds from these activities will go towards future Club functions and also help the Club purchase any necessary equipment.

9

ST PUBLIC DOMAIN

by Kim Beattie

For a machine that is not even two years old yet, the amount and quality of the public domain (PD) software available for the ST computer is truly amazing. To help the ST owner, new and old, I'll present a survey of some of the better public domain software available for the ST.

PART ONE: DESK-TOP ACCESSORIES

One of the things I like most about the ST is the ability to have up to six other programs on call, ready to be used whenever I want, even while using other programs! There is a Desk Accessory (DA) for just about every need. Applications, utilities, communications, even games. They're all here!

DISK UTILITIES: DISK MANAGER and MOBZUTIL are disk utility packages that make many of the DOS type file management commands used on the desktop available from within other programs. MOBZUTIL (the better of the two, I think), includes the following functions: Delete (files or folders), Rename/Move and Copy files, View/Change Disk Label, Create New Folder, Disk Directory, View/Change File Information, Disk Information, Free RAM, and a drive selector. All of these functions are called from a single menu that is self-explanatory and easy to use. The only thing missing in MOBZUTIL is a Format disk command. A serious omission, true, but never fear as there is (of course!) a DA for formatting disks. It's called DISKINIT and does the job very well, thank you.

RAMDISKS: A ramdisk is one of the most useful utilities there is in the computer world. It is a program that uses a part of the computer's memory as a disk drive. This "ram-disk" is treated by the computer as another disk drive in every way. The advantages are numerous, but chief among them are speed and convenience. For the ST owner with only a single drive, the ramdisk will make all the difference in the world when it comes to copying and/or moving files.

Ramdisk are nice, but they do take up memory. Once you set them up the only way to recover that memory is usually by re-booting the system. Enter INTERSECT RAMDISK. INTERSECT is different because it is a "variable" ramdisk, which can be installed and removed at will, giving you control of how your memory will be used. Need a ramdisk? With INTERSECT waiting on the desktop you can create one whenever you need it. Need more memory to run a program? No problem, just call INTERSECT back and remove the ramdisk. Very convenient.

CALCULATORS: There are many calculator DAs available, so it's just a matter of finding one you like. The one I use most is a simple four function calculator. I need a calculator that will respond to the keypad, but some calculators use mouse input only. (Yuk! The mouse is nice, but nothing beats a 10-key when it comes to using a calculator...) A couple available are PROGCALC, a programmers calculator and PROCALC, a scientific calculator.

NOTEPADS and TEXT PROCESSORS: This is one area of software where the PD offerings have fallen behind the commercial offerings. Most PD notepads are either too simple and lack basic features like loading and saving files (NOTEPAD.ACC is a good example of this type of useless accessory). Or the program is overly complex like NEWWORD.ACC which is almost a full blown word processor. While NEWWORD has all the features (and more!) I'd like in a desk accessory notepad, it uses far too much memory to be a good desk accessory.

TIME & DATE: ALARM CLOCK is a time & date accessory that not only lets you set the date and time on your ST, but also gives you the option of setting up to five alarms. Setting the time and date is easy, and the time can be displayed in the upper right corner of the screen. Up to five alarms can be set, all for different times and dates. Each alarm can have a small message associated with it too. When the set time is reached, a repeating tone sounds and the message is displayed. If working in a non-GEM environment, only the alarm will be

(ST PD, Cont.)

heard. The message will be displayed when you return to the desktop.

ROCP (Read Only Control Panel): This is a little accessory that takes the place of the CONTROL.ACC that came with the ST. It allows me to set up the colors (and other options) I prefer for my desktop at a price (in RAM) that I'm willing to pay. (I hate that high-intensity green!) Also, by calling the ROCP after a program has trashed your desktop (you know, yellow on green, that kind of stuff!), you can restore your original desktop colors and other settings. Sure beats RESETing or re-booting...

One accessory that I recommend, with caution, is called RAM-BUFFER. This accessory includes a print spooler and a RAMdisk in one small package. A print spooler is a wonderful utility that allows you to continue to use the computer while the printer is printing. Both the spooler and the RAMdisk allow for variable sizes and can be installed and removed at will. The problem with this program is that it doesn't always release all of the memory back to the user after you remove the utility. There are ways around this, but they are inconvenient and the program could have been written so that it wasn't necessary. It's a useful accessory, but not for the inexperienced user.

Other accessories include PRIVATE EYE, a utility to peek and see where your memory limits (high, low, etc) are set, and what the status of some OS options are. SET VERIFY allows you to turn on and off the disk drive write verification. CALENDAR is one of many DA calendar programs.

There are many more desk accessory programs available for the ST. GEnie has an entire software library devoted to DAs only! This article looked at some of the more popular accessories. Give 'em a try. They could change the way you use your computer.

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Please remember that some of us have small children who go to bed early. It would be appreciated if you would not call too late at night.

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RENEW MEMBERSHIPS

As a continuing service to our many busy members we publish the following list of those who's memberships were or are scheduled to terminate during the months of October and November. Check your mailing label: if a portion of it is highlighted, it means you fall into this warning category. Renewals are only $18 for another fun-filled and informative year with ACCESS. Six-month memberships are available for $10.

Due in October
W. Carroll, W.H. Courtney, G. Forister, E.S. Mead, W. Miller, J. Pierstorff, K. Sonesen.

Due in November
L. Chang, J.R. Davis, R.G. Dyer, A.V. Hartwell, B. La Perriere, M. McDonaugh, M. Mollison, A.R. Neal, B. Vanderford, V. Vyvoda.

ACCESS KEY EDITORIAL POLICY

The ACCESS KEY is published monthly by the Atari Computer Club Encompassing Suburban Sacramento. It is mailed free to all club members. Material submitted for publication should be in the hands of the Editor on or before the deadline, which is listed under "FUTURE CLUB MEETINGS". Submissions for inclusion in this newsletter are actively solicited. Additionally, if items of general or special interest to our membership are discovered in newspapers or magazines, you are encouraged to send copies to the editor or simply notify him of the article. Your contributions are always welcome.

If you have a modem, you may submit material - text files, graphics screens, etc. - by uploading them to the Club's BBS. Be sure to leave a Message to the SYSOP giving him the names of the files.

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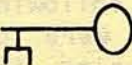
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FUTURE CLUB MEETINGS

ST SIG   9 November
   (Call Dave at 944-1291)
MODEM USERS SIG: 3 November
   (Call Kim at 338-1631)
NEWSLETTER DEADLINE: 30 October

GENERAL MEETINGS: 28 Oct, 25 Nov
                    23 Dec, 6 Jan